

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 7, 2006

Madam Maria Cino
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation,
400 7th Street, S.W.,
Washington D.C. 20590

Dear Madam Acting Secretary:

As you are well aware, the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern (DM&E) Railroad improvement project currently under consideration by the Department's Federal Railroad Administration (RFA) for a \$2.3 billion Railroad Rehabilitation & Improvement Financing (RRIF) loan will have an enormous impact on the future of Southern Minnesota's economy. We request the Department's support in ensuring this project, that is proceeding with federal backing, does not occur without sufficient mitigation for the City of Rochester.

While the DM&E rail improvement project is critical to growing businesses, lowering the cost of coal, and bringing farmers' crops and ethanol to market across the region, it raises serious concerns for Rochester, Minnesota. We are concerned the DM&E Railroad Project jeopardizes the city and the Mayo Clinic, a world-renown, life-saving institution and the state's largest private employer. As currently planned, this project's course through Rochester raises significant safety concerns, and a mitigation plan is necessary that will protect the city and the Mayo Clinic.

Accordingly, we have requested the Department conduct a study to determine what mitigation is needed to protect Rochester and the Mayo Clinic, should the DM&E Railroad Project loan be approved. We understand you continue to consider the study, but as the FRA loan approval process continues to move forward, there is little time to spare. We urgently request the Department conduct this mitigation study for Rochester and its citizens as soon as possible.

The DM&E Railroad project, if approved, would be facilitated by the federal government, so we believe it is imperative the federal government play a lead role in facilitating the protection of Rochester's citizens. We appreciate your timely attention to this critical issue and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Norm Coleman
United States Senator



Gil Gützknecht
United States Representative